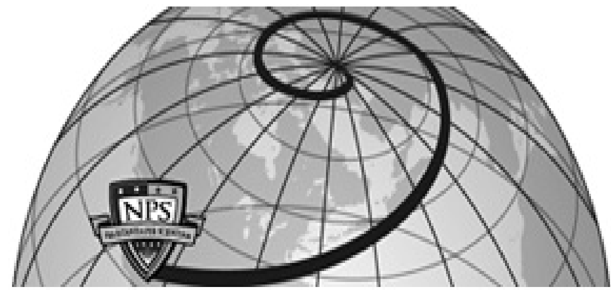
Calhoun

Institutional Archive of the Naval Postgraduate School



Calhoun: The NPS Institutional Archive

DSpace Repository

Faculty and Researchers | Faculty and Researchers' Publications

2019

Understanding the Trinamic: A Net Assessment of ISIS

Gregg, Heather S.

Gregg, Heather S. "Understanding the Trinamic: A Net Assessment of ISIS." Journal of Religion and Violence (2019).

https://hdl.handle.net/10945/62153

This publication is a work of the U.S. Government as defined in Title 17, United States Code, Section 101. Copyright protection is not available for this work in the United States.

Downloaded from NPS Archive: Calhoun

http://www.nps.edu/library

Calhoun is the Naval Postgraduate School's public access digital repository for research materials and institutional publications created by the NPS community. Calhoun is named for Professor of Mathematics Guy K. Calhoun, NPS's first appointed -- and published -- scholarly author.

Dudley Knox Library / Naval Postgraduate School
411 Dyer Road / 1 University Circle
Monterey, California USA 93943

Understanding the "Trinamic": A Net Assessment of ISIS

Heather S. Gregg

Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, California[1]

Abstract: Violent non-state actors are of particular security concern today and will continue to be for the foreseeable future. This article uses a net assessment approach to analyze the threat posed by religiously motivated, violent non-state actors and how governments can better understand these threats, their popular support, and how to minimize their effects. It proposes that the goal of governments should be to "win" critical populations away from non-state actors that require their support to survive. Using ISIS as an example, the article demonstrates that a purely enemy-centric approach to countering violent non-state actors that use religion is likely to alienate critical populations whose support is necessary to defeating these threats.

Keywords: ISIS, Islamic State, religious extremism, terrorism, net assessment

Non-state actors—individuals and groups not directly controlled by a government that seek to challenge the social or political status quo—have been a significant source of threat to governments in the twenty-first century. Violent non-state actors that use religious themes and resources to gain support and motivate behavior are of particular security concern to governments and will continue to be in the foreseeable future. Despite this, academic and policy circles have struggled with how to understand the problem of religiously motivated violent non-state actors and which actions to take to blunt their growth.

[1]Heather S. Gregg is an associate professor in the Defense Analysis Department at the Naval Postgraduate School, where she works primarily with U.S. and international special operations forces.

© *Journal of Religion and Violence* 7:1. ISSN 0738-098X. pp. 4–26
doi: 10.5840/jrv201941762

This article uses a net assessment approach to analyze the threat posed by religiously motivated violent non-state actors and how governments can better understand these threats, their popular support, and how to minimize their effects. The article begins by providing a brief overview of the net assessment process and how it can be applied to analyzing the dynamic between non-state actors, populations that directly and indirectly support these groups, and government actions aimed at undermining non-state actors, what the article calls the "trinamic." It also includes a brief discussion on the particular resources religion brings to non-state actors. It then provides a brief net assessment of ISIS to demonstrate the "trinamic."

Ultimately, non-state actors need a degree of active and passive support from critical populations to survive and carry out their objectives over the long haul; therefore, the goal of government actions should be to drive a wedge between non-state actors and populations that directly and indirectly support them. A purely enemy-centric approach to countering violent non-state actors can be counterproductive to these aims.

What Is Net Assessment?

A net assessment approach to addressing security focuses not only on a specific adversary and its intents and capabilities, but also considers one's own capabilities and goals. In other words, a net assessment approach focuses on more than just threats and is not just enemy-centric. Yee-Kuan Heng describes net assessment by summarizing: "simply put, net assessment incorporates the Sun Tzu adage of war: know the enemy and know yourself . . . net assessment studies the dynamics of interaction, and characteristics of two sides engaged in competitive situations, such as war."[2] Paul Bracken contends: "The best way to define net assessment is to understand that it is a practice. It isn't an art (like military judgment), nor is it a science (like chemistry). Rather, it's a way of tackling problems from certain distinctive perspectives that involve skills that can be improved. . . . By knowing the perspectives of net assessment, and sharpening the skills associated with each of them, one will be able to apply net assessment and also be able to speak an important language."[3]

Several types of net assessment address specific aspects of the dynamic interaction between competitors or adversaries. One form of net assessment focuses specifically on military strength, and aims to predict outcomes of force-on-force engagements with a country's adversaries. This form of net assessment includes mathematical modeling of weapons systems and their

[2]Heng 2007, 424.

[3]Bracken 2006.

capabilities, iterative game theory, table-top exercises, and other simulations designed to estimate one's military strength relative to a specific adversary.[4]

Heng notes that another form of net assessment "attempts to weigh relative military power of states in competitive situations."[5] This form of net assessment goes beyond just military forces to include factors such as economic might and political will. This process involves gathering intelligence on the enemy's capabilities and intentions and weighing these factors against one's own readiness, strengths, and vulnerabilities. Citing Bracken, Heng summarizes: "The concept can thus refer to a judgement, or a reasonable summary of the strengths and weaknesses of both sides involved in strategic competitions as they evolve: 'an overall 'net' assessment of a competitive situation' is reached after analyzing and integrating various information sources in a centralized manner to produce joint-up thinking."[6]

While scholars note that a net assessment approach to understanding competitors and adversaries is not new—one can see this assessment in the works of Sun Tsu, Clausewitz, and even France's assessment of Nazi Germany leading up to World War II[7]—net assessment gained importance to better understand future threats posed by the Soviet Union during the Cold War. Andy Marshall, then an analyst at the RAND Corporation, drafted a net assessment of Soviet and U.S. capabilities in 1972, with the broader goal of better understanding military, economic, and diplomatic policies aimed at mitigating this protracted threat.[8] RAND's net assessment called for an in-depth look at U.S. assumptions, policies and actions, not just the capabilities and intentions of the Soviet Union. Among other things, RAND's net assessment of the competition between the Soviet Union and the United States stressed the importance of more precisely identifying areas of research and development that would give the United States an advantage over its adversary.[9] Also during the Cold War, several political scientists offered net assessments of a conventional battle between NATO and Soviet forces in the Fulda Gap, including fire-power scores, the challenges of alliances and their effects on military readiness and action, and the role that various governments and political stability play on the military balance between the Soviet Union and NATO countries.[10]

---

[4]Cohen 1988; Mearsheimer, Posen, and Cohen 1989.

[5]Heng 2007, 424.

[6]Heng 2007, 424.

[7]Heng 2007, 423–425.

[8]Marshall 1972.

[9]Marshall 1972, vii.

[10]Cohen 1988; Mearsheimer, Posen, and Cohen 1989.

These types of net assessment focus specifically on competition between states and, while clearly this form of adversarial interaction still exists, a new strategic enemy has emerged—non-state actors. Scott Gartner notes, "Net Assessment 'looks at the strategic match between the two sides' strengths and weaknesses.' Integrating highly disparate factors into a single calculation represents a considerable challenge . . . the question then is, how should we conduct *net* assessment of violent non-state actors in a way that addresses these inherent challenges?"[11] Gartner further describes, "States have comparatively static boundaries, slowly changing populations, fixed resource endowments, predictable interests, and sluggishly adaptive institutions. By contrast, non-state actors such as terrorist and insurgent groups rapidly emerge, change, and die, and have widely varying capabilities, interests and behaviors."[12] Gartner's observations of the relative advantages and disadvantages of state versus non-state actor competition underscores the complexity of creating a net assessment of the dynamic between these adversaries.

Adding to the complexity of providing a net assessment of non-state actors is the challenge posed by differing definitions of "victory" between states and non-state actors. Typically, states need to defeat threatening non-state actors, usually by rendering them irrelevant to sympathetic populations, in order to declare victory. By contrast, non-state actors need only to survive in order to declare themselves victorious, at least in the short run.

Furthermore, non-state actors need the active and passive support of critical populations—either coerced or through positive inducements—to protect themselves from government actions, to garner new recruits, and to acquire key resources. They also tend to grow and prosper better when sympathetic states provide sponsorship to them, as a 2001 RAND report illustrates.[13] However, without the support of relevant populations, they will quickly whither on the vine. Ultimately, a net assessment of the dynamic between states and non-state actors needs to consider that relevant populations are their most important resource and may outweigh the need for territory, military equipment, or even funding to survive. The key components of a net assessment between these groups are summarized in Table 1.

A net assessment involving non-state actors, therefore, requires a government to know its own national and international goals, how to realize these goals, and its degree of support from critical populations. Governments must also know the non-state actor's goals, its means for realizing these goals, its

[11]Citing himself. Gartner 2015, 11.

[12]Gartner 2015, 12.

[13]Byman et al. 2001.

Table 1: States vs. Non-State Actor Net Assessment

Assessment of States	Assessment of Non-State Actors
Importance of territory	Importance of passive and active support from populations
Understanding regime type	Understanding organizational structure
Assessing government intentions	Assessing non-state actor ideology
Measuring military capabilities	Measuring financial resources/state support
Victory in war measured by defeat of adversary	Victory in war measured by not being defeated in short run, winning support of population in long run

degree of support from critical populations, and how it achieved this support. And they need to understand the population's grievances, values, and needs and vulnerabilities, including security and other services. This "trinamic" is unique from a net assessment of adversarial states in that critical populations become as important to assess as the adversary, if not more. The trinamic is depicted in Table 2.

Table 2: The Trinamic of Non-State Actor Net Assessment

The Government	The Non-State Actor	Critical Populations
• National security priorities and goals • Capabilities for achieving goals • Relationship with critical populations	• Its goals • Its means for achieving goals • Its degree of popular support and how it achieved this support	• Its grievances and vulnerabilities • Its values • Its source of security and other services

Ultimately, governments should aim to separate the support provided by critical populations from non-state actors that require the population's active and passive support to survive. As will be described, governments that focus too heavily on using force to defeat non-state actors run the risk of alienating critical populations that support them. Similarly, non-state actors that focus too heavily on terrorism—targeting populations with the intent of gaining recognition or pressuring governments into overreacting—run the risk of losing the support of critical populations that they need to survive. Ultimately, both groups should focus on "winning" the support of critical populations, as opposed to "defeating" the adversary.

Building on this discussion of net assessment, religiously motivated non-state actors—groups that draw on religious resources to develop their ideologies, build relationships with critical populations, and garner recruits and support—are a specific concern to countries around the globe. Religion is a powerful tool for them because it provides an array of readymade resources, including themes that can inform ideologies; networks that can be used to spread information and mobilize supporters; leaders (often charismatic) that have legitimacy with religious adherents; social services like charities, schools and hospitals; and even money and media outlets.[14] Furthermore, those that use religious themes to explain and justify their actions potentially have the ear of the wider community of adherents, which can be a valuable pool from which to recruit and garner support. Religion's unique contribution is that these resources are readymade and do not have to be built from scratch, which saves critical time and effort. Ultimately, non-state actors that base their narrative on religious themes, or include them within other frames, elevate conflicts in this world to ones in which divine themes of Good versus Evil, divine justice, and salvation are at stake.

As will be discussed, ISIS used a sophisticated mixture of religious themes and resources to forge the Islamic State, build a global network of likeminded groups, and inspire individuals to perpetrate terrorist acts in the West. While the Islamic State as an actual state is all but destroyed, ISIS still persists. Therefore, it is critically important to conduct a net assessment of ISIS, including how it has built support around the globe, coalition powers' response to this non-state actor, and critical populations it needs to survive.

Net Assessment of ISIS, the Counter-ISIS Coalition, and the Wider Muslim Population

The emergence of ISIS in 2011, its rapid expansion throughout Syria and Iraq, its creation of the caliphate and Islamic State, its support from likeminded non-state actor groups around the globe, and the attraction of over 40,000 foreign fighters took countries around the globe by surprise.[15] In 2014, a coalition of nearly eighty countries formed to address the problem, drawing primarily on military force to confront the Islamic State. This coalition succeeded in defeating it by 2019; however, despite its demise, ISIS as a non-state actor persists and continues to work with likeminded non-state actors on several continents. Furthermore, its ideology has inspired individuals with no direct ties to the group to carry out terrorist acts in the West. Therefore, a net assessment of

---

[14]Gregg 2018; Gregg 2014.

[15]Barrett 2017.

the group, government policies and actions aimed at undermining ISIS, and possible wider Muslim support for the group, are important for understanding the persistence of this non-state actor. Each of these parts of the trinamic will be investigated below.

ISIS

ISIS emerged, in part, as a result of the U.S.-led Operation Iraqi Freedom and unsuccessful efforts to install democracy in Iraq following the overthrow of Saddam Hussein in 2003. It emerged from the remnants of Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), one of the country's main insurgent groups during the U.S.-led occupation, and was aligned with Al Qaeda's arm in Syria, the al Nusra Front, before a falling out with Al Qaeda leadership 2013.[16] From 2013 to 2014, ISIS expanded rapidly in Syria, taking advantage of the civil war there to hold cities, to recruit and to carry out operations against other insurgent groups and the Syrian government. In June of 2014, ISIS rolled over Syria's border with Iraq en masse, and with little effort took Mosul, Iraq's second largest city. On June 26, Abu Bakr al Baghdadi, the leader of ISIS, announced the creation of the caliphate with himself as the caliph.[17]

ISIS's ideology draws on a mixture of themes from Islam, combined with various social and political grievances, to create an extreme and intolerant agenda. Specifically, it embraces a particular understanding of Sunni Islam known as Salafism. Salafis believe that the Qur'an and the example of the Prophet provide a complete guide for Islam today, and that all other contributions or interpretations, particularly human reason, are *biddah*, or innovation. Quintan Wictorowicz describes, "Salafis believe that by strictly following the rules and guidance in the Qur'an and Sunna (path or example of the Prophet Muhammad) they eliminate the biases of human subjectivity and self-interest, thereby allowing them to identify the singular truth of God's commands." Wictorowicz goes on to explain, "From this perspective, there is only one legitimate religious interpretation; Islamic pluralism does not exist."[18]

Furthermore, ISIS invokes the "Prophetic methodology," which is the belief that following the Prophet's example to the most precise detail will help purify and consolidate the worldwide Muslim community.[19] All Muslims know the Prophet and revere his life. John Renard notes, "From a spiritual perspective, Muhammad functions as the progenitor par excellence, for God created

[16]McCants 2015, 89–92. Williams 2017, 273–274.

[17]McCants 2015, 126–144; Wood 2016, 50–52; Kilcullen 2016, 85.

[18]Wictorowicz 2006, 207.

[19]Wood 2015.

him first of all creatures. Mystical poets call him the final cause of creation, the reason behind it all, quoting the sacred tradition, 'But for you, I would have not created the universe.'"[20] ISIS, in other words, is using a particular understanding of the Prophet's actions and his life to explain its actions and goals to the wider Muslim community.

ISIS recreated the caliphate as a means of unifying and purifying the Muslim world through this understanding of Islam. Initially, the Muslim community was united under one leader, the Prophet Muhammed, followed by the first four leaders after his death, or caliphs. However, after Ali, the fourth Caliph, was murdered in 661, the community split between the majority, who recognized the Caliph, and those who followed leadership based on bloodline to the Prophet Muhammed, a group that became Shias. ISIS claimed to recreate the caliphate as an attempt to reunify the community. Furthermore, only with a rightly guided leader are some aspects of sharia implementable. The recreation of the caliph, therefore, was also a means of implementing the most perfect form of shariah on earth.[21]

ISIS further made "purifying" the Ummah—the worldwide Muslim community—one of its goals. It targeted Shia Muslims, first and foremost, of which thousands were massacred in Iraq and Syria since its rise to power.[22] Sufis, the mystical tradition in Islam, have also been targeted. Finally, ISIS has killed fellow Sunnis who did not conform to their understanding of Salafism, including more secular minded Sunnis.[23] Outside the faith, ISIS has targeted Christians, Yazidis, and any other religious group that stands in its way. Overall, ISIS has murdered an estimated 15,000 in Iraq and Syria, and 202 mass graves have been found as of October 2018.[24]

In addition to building on concepts of unity and purity, ISIS's ideology also contains themes of apocalypticism. Wood and McCants, for example, argue that its grand strategy is actually driven by apocalyptic imagining; members draw from well-known themes of apocalypticism in Islam, including the epic battles between "Rome" and Islamic forces, the coming of the Mahdi, the return of Jesus, and the end of times.[25] Furthermore, evidence suggests that its earthly salvific goals are actually a means for realizing the apocalypse. Wood, for example, argues that the recreation of the caliphate and the implementation

[20]Renard 1999, 105.

[21]Esposito 2003, 49, 169; Wood 2015.

[22]Alaaldin 2017.

[23]Williams 2017, 285–288; Haykel 2015, 21–26.

[24]UNAMI 2018.

[25]Wood 2015; McCants 2015.

of complete and "perfect" shariah will actually create the conditions for the end of times.[26] The realization of this earthly agenda has become the necessary condition for apocalyptic messianism.

ISIS has drawn on a complex mixture of religious and material resources to realize its extremist and apocalyptic goals. Perhaps ISIS's most important resource is its leader Abu Bakr al Baghdadi, who has several important traits that are essential for affirming and executing its grand strategy. First, Baghdadi claims lineage to the Quraysh tribe and the Prophet Muhammed, which, according to some interpretations, is necessary to become caliph and fulfills an important apocalyptic prophecy that twelve rightly guided caliphs will govern the ummah before the end of times.[27] Second, unlike bin Laden, Baghdadi has formal religious education and holds a PhD in Qur'anic recitation from the University of Baghdad.[28] Third, Baghdadi has experience as an insurgent. In 2004, U.S. forces apprehended him in Fallujah and he spent nearly a year in Bucca detention facility, where he made valuable contacts with elite forces that served Saddam Hussein. Following his release, he resumed insurgent activity and, in 2006, his group became part of AQI, the forerunner to ISIS.[29] He served in various jobs with the insurgency, including as part of the Shura council, before becoming emir in 2011.[30]

Until the Islamic State's collapse, ISIS also had significant material resources, particularly finances, at its disposal. It built a robust array of funding streams, including revenue from oil, kidnapping for ransom, black market antiquities sales, fake charities, theft and sponsorship from "angel donors," wealthy individuals from the Arabian peninsula that support ISIS's Salafi agenda. It also extracted taxes from the local populations in Iraq and Syria.[31] These financial assets were necessary for paying fighters and those that immigrated to Iraq and Syria. For example, ISIS initially paid fighters in Iraq and Syria between $400 to $600 U.S. dollars a month for their service before the Islamic State lost territory and revenue. ISIS also financially rewarded women who married its fighters and had children.[32]

ISIS also worked to build relationships with different critical populations that it needed for support and resources. First, the Islamic State provided

[26]Wood 2015.

[27]McCants 2015, 74, 116.

[28]McCants 2015, 117.

[29]McCants 2015, 76.

[30]McCants 2015, 78.

[31]Giovanni, Goodman, and Sharkov 2014; BBC 2018.

[32]Nicks 2016; Bloom 2015.

varying degrees of governance, including both coercion and resources, to the populations it controlled in Iraq and Syria. A 2014 report from the Institute for the Study of War, for example, notes that, "Through the integration of military and political campaigns, particularly in the provincial capital of Raqqa, ISIS has built a holistic system of governance that includes religious, educational, judicial, security, humanitarian, and infrastructure projects, among others."[33] The report goes on to argue that, despite its holistic vision for governance and building relationships with the local population, governance would become its greatest weakness if the level of service it was providing was not sustained, a prediction that proved to be true.[34] A RAND report that used satellite imagery to evaluate ISIS governance in Iraq and Syria came to a similar conclusion. By studying five cities under ISIS control, they noted that, in cities where ISIS had complete control, such as Raqqa and Mosul, electricity was restored and the cities appeared to be functioning under its governance. However, in militarily contested cities, specifically Ramadi, Tikrit, and Deir ez-Zor, basic governance was much more difficult to establish. These cities were some of the first to fall from ISIS control.[35]

ISIS also encouraged Muslims from all over the world to immigrate to the Islamic State, to join the caliphate and to fight on its behalf. As early as 2011, foreign fighters began pouring into Syria from neighboring countries including Libya, Jordan, and Turkey. The Soufan Center, which tracks foreign fighters connected to ISIS, estimated that over 40,000 foreign fighters came to the Islamic State in all, and nearly 20,000 women and children came to support the effort.[36] Beyond foreign fighters, numerous individuals have perpetrated terrorist actions on behalf of ISIS without any formal connection to the non-state actor, including Syed Rizwan Farooq and Tashfin Malik (2015 San Bernadino killing of 14); Omar Mateen (2016 Pulse Nightclub shooter of 49); and Mohamed Salmene Lahouaiej-Bouhlel (2016 Bastille day killer of 86).[37] These individuals received inspiration but no formal training from ISIS.

Finally, ISIS built a network of likeminded non-state actors around the globe. Within months of declaring the caliphate, other non-state actors began to pledge the *baya*, an oath of allegiance to the Islamic State and Baghdadi as its caliph. Within its first year, Boko Haram in Nigeria pledged allegiance to

---

[33]Caris and Reynolds 2014, 4.

[34]Caris and Reynolds 2014, 5.

[35]Irving 2018; McCants 2015, 135–139; Kilcullen 2016, 94–95.

[36]Barrett 2017.

[37]Williams 2017, 276–281. For other fighters with no direct connection to ISIS, see Kilcullen 2016, 112–117.

the caliphate, as did Abu Sayyef Group in the Philippines, leaders from the Haqqani network in Pakistan and Afghanistan, insurgents in the Sinai Peninsula in Egypt, and Islamist groups in Libya. ISIS, in other words, transformed from an Arab, Middle Eastern phenomenon into a truly global, transnational, super networked non-state actor.[38] Groups that pledged the baya to ISIS have persisted and continue to identify with it despite the decline of the Islamic State, including in the Sahel, the Horn of Africa and in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Despite being militarily confronted in the Philippines and in Libya, ISIS affiliate groups have reemerged in both countries.[39]

The Coalition's Response to ISIS

The rise of ISIS and the creation of the Islamic State prompted an international response aimed at eradicating this threat. In September 2014, a multinational coalition of 73 countries and four transnational organizations formed the "global coalition against Daesh [ISIS]," with the express intent of "degrading and ultimately defeating Daesh."[40] Four "pillars" govern the coalition: 1) to be a mechanism for state mobilization; 2) to work "by, with and through partners to help states solve their problems with Daesh"; 3) to be a voluntary organization; 4) and to recognize that no single strategy will eradicate Daesh and that a "tailored" approach is needed.[41]

First, the multinational response to ISIS has focused heavily on the use of military force to diminish ISIS's capabilities in Iraq and Syria, and to degrade its affiliates around the globe. In October 2014, the U.S. government named its counter-ISIS mission Operation Inherent Resolve, and its objective was to degrade ISIS's capabilities, largely through an air campaign, and to train, advise, and assist Iraqi and Syrian troops to fight ISIS on the ground. Together with British, French, Dutch, Australian, Jordanian, Saudi Arabian, Emirati, and Turkish forces and (to an extent) Russian forces, which are not part of the coalition, this combined military effort conducted an estimated 13,315 air attacks against ISIS targets in Iraq and 14,660 strikes against targets in Syria. These operations have claimed credit for killing tens-of-thousands of ISIS fighters, forcing ISIS out of its major cities, denying it territory, and destroying its military reserves in addition to other material assets.[42]

---

[38]McCants 2015, 139–142; Kilcullen 2016, 127–132.

[39]For Libya, see Daragahi 2018; for the Philippines, see Mogato 2017.

[40]Global Coalition 2018.

[41]Global Coalition 2018.

[42]BBC 2018.

A similar coalition, composed mostly of Special Operations Forces (SOF), has also gone after ISIS affiliates around the globe, combining military strikes with missions to train, advise and assist local forces. In these cases, SOF has worked closely with host nations and their militaries, often side-by-side, to aid these countries and provide capabilities in their fight against ISIS and similar militant groups, like Al Qaeda. As a coalition, SOF has operated in Libya, the Sahel and Horn of Africa, Yemen, and the Philippines.[43] In Yemen, Pakistan, Somalia, and Afghanistan the United States also has used Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) to target and kill ISIS and Al Qaeda operatives and assets.[44] In Afghanistan, a counter-ISIS mission has become part of the wider continuation of Operation Enduring Freedom, currently in its seventeenth year.[45]

Second, countries have reacted to ISIS by increasing their homeland defense. These measures have run the gamut from increased infrastructure protection to restrictions on immigration. In the United States, for example, the Trump administration issued a travel ban on seven countries, five Muslim majority countries (Iran, Libya, Yemen, Somalia, and Syria), citing national security as the reason for the executive order.[46] The concern over the return of ISIS fighters from Iraq and Syria has also alarmed countries. However, as of 2017, the Soufan Center notes that surprisingly few fighters have returned.[47] Many have chosen neither to stay in Syria and Iraq nor go home but rather to go to a third country to fight with ISIS affiliates—particularly in Egypt, Libya, Afghanistan, and the Philippines—but also to stay in Syria and Iraq to continue the fight. An August 2018 UN report estimated that between 20,000 and 30,000 foreign fighters remained in Iraq and Syria and will continue to fight for the recreation of the caliphate.[48]

Third, various countries have implemented deradicalization and Countering Violent Extremism programs (CVE) with the intent of rehabilitating individuals who have turned towards religious radicalism, including specific groups like ISIS, and programs designed to prevent radicalism from occurring in the first place. These programs have run the gamut from those that aim to build critical thinking skills, to ones that provide religious education, to programs designed to teach vocational skills aimed at making vulnerable

---

[43]Ryan 2016; Hennigan 2017.

[44]Watts et al. 2017, 50–81.

[45]Burns 2018.

[46]Liptak and Shear 2018.

[47]Barrett 2017, 9–13.

[48]*Al Jazeera* 2018.

youth more employable.[49] The success of these programs is hard to measure and controversial.[50] In France, for example, a deradicalization program that targeted Muslim immigrants, focused on instilling *laïcité* (French values) in addition to teaching classes on religion, democracy and history as a means of socializing at-risk youth. The program was shut down months after it began, following protests from local citizens who were afraid that the school would bring jihadis to their town.[51]

Finally, some efforts have focused on populations in areas hardest hit by ISIS, such as Iraq and Syria, or countries with ISIS-affiliated non-state actors, like Nigeria and the Philippines, but the response has been considerably less robust than military operations. First, most of these countries suffer from political, social and economic insecurity, along with open conflict and hostilities. Working with these vulnerable populations is difficult because local governments often lack the capacity to target at risk areas, and international efforts are stifled by insecure environments. Second, much of the counter-ISIS work has focused on fighting the non-state actor militarily and measuring success by territory retaken, fighters killed, and resources destroyed, rather than working with vulnerable populations. Third, working with vulnerable populations is harder to do, takes longer and is it is more difficult to measure progress. Despite this, groups like the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the U.S. government's arm for overseas development, has made countering violent extremism one of its priorities and addresses "drivers of violent extremism in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia" through various forms of development.[52]

The Wider Muslim Population

Trapped in the middle between religiously motivated non-state actors claiming to fight for divine justice on their behalf and governments aiming to undermine ISIS, is the wider Muslim ummah, or worldwide Muslim community. Both ISIS and coalition powers challenging the non-state actor claim to be fighting on behalf of the population and to have its best interests at heart. However, several indicators suggest that the population, while disdainful of ISIS, is also suspicious of powers claiming to fight the non-state actor on their behalf.

[49]Johnson 2018.

[50]Gunaratna, Jerard, and Rubin 2011.

[51]Crowell 2017.

[52]Denoeux and Carter 2009.

Most specifically, although polling data on Muslim attitudes towards ISIS is thin, a 2015 Pew survey on the subject is telling. This poll found that, in ten Muslim majority countries surveyed,[53] respondents "overwhelmingly expressed negative views of ISIS."[54] The report notes that, "[s]ix-in-ten or more had unfavorable opinions of ISIS in a diverse group of nations, including Indonesia, Turkey, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Malaysia and Senegal." Lebanon had a near universal condemnation of the group. Perhaps of concern, notable numbers of respondents in Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Mayasia, and Senegal did not know what to think of ISIS (20, 28, 25, and 29 percent respectively), and in Pakistan that number was 62 percent.[55] But even these statistics suggest that the majority of people in these countries do not overtly support ISIS.

A 2017 Zogby poll of ten Muslim majority countries had similar findings.[56] The survey focused on a variety of questions posed to millennials about their faith and identity. When asked about the Islamic nature of extremist groups like Al Qaeda and ISIS, the overwhelming majority said these groups were completely wrong. The report notes, however, that, "[i]n Lebanon, four in 10, have ambivalent views on extremist groups while in Oman it is 37%." The report surmises, "[y]oung Arabs who believe that there can be some, partial correctness to these groups will be susceptible and vulnerable to their messaging and influence. This vulnerability is sure to be a greater test for the Muslim community in the long term than the continued physical presence of extremist groups in current conflict zones in Syria and Iraq."[57] When asked why individuals join extremist groups, the top reason cited in eight countries was "a conviction that these groups represent truth,"[58] followed by "extreme religious discourse and teachings," then "poor levels of education" followed by economic conditions and state oppression.[59] Thus, Muslims across the ummah appear to be deeply suspicious and condemning of ISIS but do express some views that may make them vulnerable to extremism.

However, polling data also suggest that average Muslims are deeply suspicious of western powers, especially the United States, and their foreign

[53]Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Indonesia, Burkina Faso, Palestinian territories, Nigeria, Senegal, Pakistan and Malaysia.

[54]Poushter 2015.

[55]Poushter 2015.

[56]Yunas et al. 2017. The countries are Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Mauritania, Sudan, Iraq, Lebanon, Oman, Yemen and Qatar.

[57]Yunas et al. 2017, 27.

[58]Yunas et al. 2017, 28. The countries are Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Sudan, Mauritania, Yemen, Oman, and Iraq.

[59]Yunas et al. 2017, 28.

policies. Beginning in 2002, the Pew Foundation began surveying countries around the world on attitudes towards the United States. Polling data from key Muslim countries, particularly those in the Middle East, have revealed chronically low opinions towards the United States. For example, the 2015 polling data showed that, of the countries surveyed worldwide, the United States is the least popular with Jordanians, Turks, Lebanese, Palestinians, and Pakistanis. Jordanians registered only 14 percent favorability rating towards the United States, the lowest of all countries surveyed.[60] A 2017 Pew poll found that the majority surveyed in five Middle Eastern and North African countries (Jordan, Lebanon, Israel, Turkey, Tunisia) saw the United States as playing a bigger role in the region than it did ten years ago, and only 27 percent viewed the United States favorably.[61]

It is well understood that the U.S.-led wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have had negative consequences, particularly in regards to inspiring and justifying non-state actor violence. These wars have become powerful points of validation for religious terrorists who claim these are examples of U.S. intentions to destroy Islam.[62] The war in Iraq also inadvertently paved the way for the rise of ISIS through the power vacuum it created with the overthrow of Saddam Hussein, the disenfranchisement of the Sunni population, and the insurgent groups the occupation inspired. Popular rumors that the United States created ISIS to destroy Iraq and Muslim countries is, more broadly, further evidence that average Muslims are deeply suspicious of the United States, its foreign policy actions, and its motivations.[63] These rumors spread beyond just the Middle East and included Muslims in Southeast Asia.[64]

Also noteworthy, polling data suggest that Muslims want religion in the public sphere, and want greater inclusion of shariah law in their countries. A 2013 Pew survey found that, of the countries polled, "overwhelming percentages of Muslims in many countries want Islamic law (sharia) to be the official law of the land."[65] However, it is unclear if most understand shariah in terms of family law, criminal law, or both. These findings suggest that many Muslims may be moving towards a more fundamentalist mind set, one in which secular politics and society are not the desired goals. The 2017 Zogby poll

---

[60] Wike, Stokes, and Poushter 2015, 12.

[61] Fetterolf and Poushter 2017.

[62] Al Qaeda especially named U.S. foreign policy as one of the main reasons for taking violent action. See Bin Laden 1996 and Bin Laden 2004.

[63] Kirpatrick 2014.

[64] Author's conversations with Indonesians in 2016.

[65] Bell 2013, 15.

of millennial Muslims surveyed found that respondents in all ten countries named "living by Islamic ethics and morals" the most important part of their faith, and that, if "cultural content breaches the moral and ethical values of society, it should be banned."[66]

While more polling needs to be done to better understand Muslim perceptions across the ummah and with specific communities that have been directly affected by ISIS, these brief findings suggest that, of the countries surveyed, Muslims are condemning of ISIS, but also want religion regulating aspects of public life. Furthermore, they are deeply fearful of western powers, particularly the United States, and their policies towards the Muslim world.

Conclusion

This net assessment of ISIS, governments fighting ISIS, and the wider Muslim population yields the following observations.

Coalition forces have had considerable success using military force to deny ISIS territory in Syria and Iraq, in addition to killing tens-of-thousands of its fighters and destroying its resources. The destruction of the Islamic State raises important questions for what ISIS's next move may be. There is evidence to suggest that ISIS will fight for the recreation of the caliphate, which requires "power, authority and control of territory."[67] The fact that Al Baghdadi has not admitted to the defeat of the Islamic State, along with the continued presence of an estimated 20,000 to 30,000 foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq, suggest that the desire to recreate the caliphate is still alive in the minds of many of its foreign fighters.[68] The caliphate outside of Iraq and Syria may also be a possibility. Several ISIS affiliates have attempted to hold territory, including ISIS in the Philippines, which captured and held the city of Marawi in Mindanao for five months in 2017 before the Philippine military drove it out. In Nigeria, Boko Haram held territory the size of Belgium before a multinational task force of regional militaries and international advisors took back the territory. ISIS affiliates also have held and lost territory in Libya and Afghanistan.[69] All of these locations could have been potential places to relocate the caliphate, but the denial of territory has precluded it. If coalition forces continue to deny ISIS territory to establish the caliphate, ISIS will need to reinvent its grand

[66]Yunas et al. 2017, 13–14.

[67]McCants 2015, 116.

[68]*Al Jazeera* 2018.

[69]For the Philippines, see Postings 2017; for Boko Haram, see Blair 2015; for Libya, see Daragahi 2018; For Afghanistan, see *Stars and Stripes* 2018.

strategy because its current vision, both in terms of unifying and purifying the ummah and its apocalyptic aims, are utterly dependent on it.

Second, in addition to going after the caliphate, efforts to target the leader of ISIS, al Baghdadi, may also force the non-state actor to drastically change its ideology and *raison d'être*. Al Baghdadi has unique attributes that will not be easy to duplicate, including blood ties to the Prophet Muhammed's tribe, extensive religious education, *bona fides* as both an insurgent and a religious leader, and recognition by his followers as the caliph. While certainly other leaders can rise to manage ISIS as a non-state actor, none will be able to duplicate the blood and religious traits necessary to be the rightly guided caliph. Therefore, successfully removing Al Baghdadi from the battlefield may have significant consequences for ISIS' grand scenario of creating the caliphate, unifying and purifying the ummah, and hastening the end of times.

Third, despite the de facto loss of the caliphate, ISIS persists as a non-state actor and likeminded groups continue to claim allegiance to it. ISIS affiliates persist in North Africa, the Sinai Peninsula, Southeast Asia, the Sahel, the Horn of Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, and along the Afghan-Pakistani border despite concerted efforts from coalition SOF and local governments to target these groups and deny them territory. A key point to monitor moving forward is why groups continue to affiliate with ISIS despite its diminished status, and what benefits these groups gain from this alliance. Working to undermine "perks" that come with the ISIS brand is important for diminishing its appeal with affiliates.

Fourth, the anticipation of foreign fighters returning from the battlefield to wreak havoc on the homeland appears, so far, to be unfounded. Rather, the ISIS threat to the homeland has come from citizens that have been inspired, not trained, by ISIS. A 2017 Soufan Center report quotes Thomas Hegghammer, whose analysis finds that, "in the first year of the Caliphate there were 'over twice as many IS sympathizer plots (22) as plots involving foreign fighters."[70] An August 2018 statement by Al Baghdadi called for continued attacks against infidels by sympathetic Muslims around the globe: "A bullet fired, stabbing, detonation of an IED in your countries are tantamount to a thousand attacks here in [Syria and Iraq], and don't neglect the ramming attacks on the road."[71] Efforts to defend the homeland from ISIS terrorist acts, therefore, is still important and relevant, but requires the difficult task of discerning which citizens may be a threat to their own population. In these countries, governments should work to build better relationships with their

[70]Barrett 2017, 15.

[71]Al Baghdadi 2018, 6.

own Muslim populations. They are, in most cases, the first line of defense against domestic sympathizers to ISIS.

Finally, coalition powers have devoted the least amount of time and effort towards understanding critical Muslim populations and winning them away from ISIS. Ultimately, ISIS cannot persist without the support of key demographics, specifically local populations in which ISIS operates, foreign supporters, and the wider Muslim community. Most critically, coalition powers need to engage local populations where ISIS operates or has operated. In Syria, the population has suffered ineffably through war and violent conflict. Unfortunately, these populations remain largely out of reach of international organizations (IOs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the Assad regime either ignores or persecute these citizens. Helping vulnerable populations in Syria, therefore, will continue to be a challenge moving forward. In Iraq, the international community has more opportunities to engage populations. Ultimately, anti-ISIS coalition powers should encourage the newly formed Iraqi government to engage local Sunni populations and ensure that they are part of the political process and protected from retaliatory attacks. This is not an easy sell for the Shia-dominated government but coalition powers should provide incentives for the Iraqi government to be more inclusive of its Sunni minority. In the end, the destruction of the Islamic State in Syrian and Iraq was only phase one of the overall war to defeat the ISIS phenomenon, which includes affiliates around the globe.

In countries with ISIS affiliates, similar efforts to engage at-risk populations are important for undermining these non-state actors. Military action alone is unlikely to eradicate the problem. In Mindanao, for example, Philippine forces succeeded in routing ISIS fighters from Marawi, but not after literally destroying the entire city. The population there, which is almost entirely Muslim, is vulnerable to further radicalization given this enormous disruption to their lives.[72] In Nigeria, the fight against Boko Haram has created an estimated 110,000 refugees, and 87,600 have registered with UNHCR in Cameroon alone. The Cameroonian government is forcibly repatriating some refugees, but without security and other necessities, this population also remains vulnerable to extremism.[73]

Finally, the anti-ISIS coalition should do more to harness the popular distain for ISIS in the Muslim world. As the polling data suggest, the overwhelming majority of the ummah sees ISIS as illegitimate and a perversion of Islam. However, it also appears that the majority of the ummah is not taking

---

[72]Postings 2017.

[73]Mbiyozo 2018.

action to disagree with or undermine ISIS's appeal to a small but influential minority. Countering ISIS requires more than not supporting it, it also requires actively disagreeing with its message and providing a better one in its place. Muslim youth from across the ummah should work to actively reject and discredit ISIS's message, sending a clear statement that it does not speak for their faith.

References

Alaaldin, Ranj. 2017. "The ISIS Campaign Against Iraq's Shia is not Politics: It's Genocide." *Guardian*, January 5, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/jan/05/isis-iraq-shia-muslims-jihadis-atrocities. Last accessed 6 May 2017.

Al Baghdadi. 2018. "Give Glad Tidings to Those Who Patiently Persevere." August 22, translated by the Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, https://www.terrorism-info.org.il/app/uploads/2018/08/E_221_18.pdf. Last accessed 25 August 2018.

Al Jazeera. 2018. "UN Report: 20,000–30,000 Foreign ISIL Fighters Left in Iraq and Syria." *Al Jazeera*, August 13, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/08/report-20000-30000-isil-fighers-left-iraq-syria-180813200940166.html. Last accessed 23 August 2018.

Barrett, Richard. 2017. "Beyond the Caliphate: Foreign Fighters and the Threat of Returnees." *The Soufan Center*, October 2017, http://thesoufancenter.org/research/beyond-caliphate/. Last accessed 21 August 2018.

BBC. 2018. "Islamic State and the Crisis in Syria and Iraq in Maps." *BBC News*, March 28, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-27838034. Last accessed 20 August 2018.

Bell, James. 2013. "The World's Muslims: Religion Politics, and Society." *Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life*, April 30, http://www.pewforum.org/files/2013/04/worlds-muslims-religion-politics-society-full-report.pdf. Last accessed 20 July 2015.

Bin Laden, Osama. 1996. "Declaration of Jihad against Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holiest Sites." https://ctc.usma.edu/harmony-program/declaration-of-jihad-against-the-americans-occupying-the-land-of-the-two-holiest-sites-original-language-2/. Last accessed 25 August 2018.

Bin Laden, Osama. 2004. "Full Transcript of Bin Laden's Speech." *Al Jazeera*, https://www.aljazeera.com/archive/2004/11/200849163336457223.html. Last accessed 25 August 2018.

Blair, David 2015. "Boko Haram is Now a Mini-State with its Own Territory." *Telegraph*, January 10, https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/nigeria/11337722/Boko-Haram-is-now-a-mini-Islamic-State-with-its-own-territory.html. Last accessed 23 August 2018.

Bloom, Mia. 2015. "How ISIS is Using Marriage as a Trap." Huffington Post Blog, March 2, https://www.huffingtonpost.com/mia-bloom/isis-marriage-trap_b_6773576.html. Last accessed 20 August 2018.

Bracken. Paul. 2006. "Net Assessment: A Practical Guide." *Parameters* 36(1): 90–100.

Burns, Robert. 2018. "U.S. Says it Will Intensify Counter IS-Fight in Afghanistan." *PBS News Hour*, June 8, https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/u-s-says-it-will-intensify-counter-is-fight-in-afghanistan. Last accessed 20 August 2018.

Byman, Daniel, Peter Chalk, Bruce Hoffman, William Rosenau, and David Brannan. 2001. *Trends in Outside Support for Insurgent Movements*. RAND. https://doi.org/10.7249/MR1405

Caris, Charles C., and Samuel Reynolds. 2014. "ISIS Governance in Syria." *Institute for the Study of War, Middle East Security Report* 2: 1–43.

Cohen, Eliot A. 1988. "Towards a Better Net Assessment: Rethinking the European Conventional Balance." *International Security* 13(1): 50–89. https://doi.org/10.2307/2538896

Crowell, Maddy. 2017. "What Went Wrong with France's Decradicalization Program?" *Atlantic*, September 28, https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/09/france-jihad-deradicalization-macron/540699/. Last accessed 11 April 2019.

Daragahi, Borzou. 2018. "ISIS Resurrection: Libya Attacks Foreshadow Terror to Come." *Daily Beast*, June 29, https://www.thedailybeast.com/isis-resurrection-libya-attacks-foreshadow-terror-to-come. Last accessed 23 August 2018.

Denoeux, Guilan, and Lynn Carter. 2009. "Guide to the Drivers of Violent Extremism." *USAID*, https://www.usaid.gov/countering-violent-extremism. Last accessed 19 August 2018.

Esposito, John L. 2003. *Oxford Dictionary of Islam*. Oxford University Press.

Fetterolf, Janet, and Jacob Poushter. 2017. "Key Middle East Countries See Russia, Turkey and the U.S. All Playing Larger Rolls in the Region." *Pew Global Attitudes Project*, December 11, http://www.pewglobal.org/2017/12/11/key-middle-east-publics-see-russia-turkey-and-u-s-all-playing-larger-roles-in-region/. Last accessed 19 August 2018.

Gartner, Scott Sigmund. 2015. "Introduction to the Special Issue." *CTX* 5(3): 11–14.

Giovanni, Janine di, Leah McGrath Goodman, and Damien Sharkov. 2014. "How Does ISIS Fund its Reign of Terror?" *Newsweek*, November 6, https://www.newsweek.com/2014/11/14/how-does-isis-fund-its-reign-terror-282607.html, as of August 20, 2018.

Global Coalition. 2018. http://theglobalcoalition.org/en/partners/. Last accessed 18 August 18 2018.

Gregg, Heather S. 2014. *The Path to Salvation: Religious Violence from the Crusades to Jihad*. University of Nebraska Press.

Gregg, Heather S. 2018. "Religious Resources and Terrorism." *Numen* 65(1): 185–206.

Gunaratna, Rohan, Jolene Jerard, and Lawrence Rubin, eds. 2011. *Terrorist Rehabilitation and Counter-radicalisation: New Approaches to Counter-Terrorism.* Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203830482

Haykel, Bernard. 2015. "The History and Ideology of the Islamic State." In *Blind Spot: America's Response to the Middle East*, ed. Nicholas Burns and Jonathan Price. Aspen Institute.

Heng, Yee-Kuan. 2007. "Old Wine in New Bottles? Reconfiguring Net Assessment for 21st Century Security Analysis." *Contemporary Security Policy* 28(3): 423–443. https://doi.org/10.1080/13523260701737737

Hennigan, W. J. 2017. "The New American Way of War." *Time*, November 30, http://time.com/5042700/inside-new-american-way-of-war/. Last accessed 20 August 2018.

Irving, Doug. 2018. "What Life Under ISIS Looked Like from Space." *RAND Review*, January 9, https://www.rand.org/blog/rand-review/2018/01/what-life-under-isis-looked-like-from-space.html. Last accessed 18 August 2018.

Johnson, Isaac. 2018. "Lessons in Ideology: A Study of the Relationship between Formal Education, Socialization, and Violent Extremism." Naval Postgraduate School Master's Thesis.

Kilcullen, David. 2016. *Blood Year: The Unraveling of Western Counterterrorism.* Oxford University Press.

Kirpatrick, David D. 2014. "Suspicions Run Deep In Iraq that the CIA and Islamic State are United." *New York Times*, September 20, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/21/world/middleeast/suspicions-run-deep-in-iraq-that-cia-and-the-islamic-state-are-united.html?_r=0. Last accessed 20 July 2015.

Liptak, Adam, and Michael D. Shear. 2018. "Trump's Travel Ban is Upheld By Supreme Court." *New York Times*, June 26, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/26/us/politics/supreme-court-trump-travel-ban.html. Last accessed 18 August 18.

Marshall, A. W. 1972. *Long-Term Competition with the Soviets: A Framework for Strategic Analysis*. RAND.

Mbiyozo, Aimee-Noel. 2018. "Cameroon's Forced Returns Puts Nigerian Refugees at Risk." *Institute for Security Studies*, May 4, https://issafrica.org/iss-today/cameroons-forced-returns-put-nigerian-refugees-at-risk. Last accessed 22 August 2018.

McCants, William. 2015. *The ISIS Apocalypse: The History, Strategy and Doomsday Vision of the Islamic State*. St. Martin's Press.

Mearsheimer, John J., Barry R. Posen, and Eliot A. Cohen. 1989. "Reassessing Net Assessment." *International Security* 13(4): 128–179. https://doi.org/10.2307/2538782

Mogato, Manuel. 2017. "The Philippines is Hunting a Possible New ISIS 'Emir' Who Survived the Battle of Marawi." *Business Insider*, November 6, https://www.businessinsider.com/the-philippines-is-hunting-down-a-possible-new-isis-emir-2017-11. Last accessed 23 August 2018.

Nicks, Denver. 2016. "ISIS Fighters Just Got a Huge Pay Cut." *Time*, January 19, http://time.com/money/4185726/isis-fighters-pay-cut/. Last accessed 20 August 2018.

Postings, Robert. 2017. "The Battle of Marawi: A Brief Overview." *International Review*, December 24, https://international-review.org/battle-marawi-brief-summary/. Last accessed 23 August 2018.

Poushter, Jacob. 2015. "In Nations with Significant Muslim Populations, Much Disdain for ISIS." November 17, http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/11/17/in-nations-with-significant-muslim-populations-much-disdain-for-isis/. Last accessed 19 August 2018.

Renard, John. 1999. *Islam and the Heroic Image*. Mercer University Press.

Ryan, Missy. 2016. "U.S. Special Operations Troops Aiding Libyan Forces in Major Battle Against the Islamic State." *Washington Post*, August 9, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/checkpoint/wp/2016/08/09/u-s-special-operations-forces-are-providing-direct-on-the-ground-support-for-the-first-time-in-libya/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.4e5580de55c2. Last accessed 20 August 2018.

Stars and Stripes. 2018. "Green Berets, Afghan Special Forces Capture ISIS 'Capital.'" Military.com, https://www.military.com/daily-news/2018/07/08/green-berets-afghan-commandos-capture-isis-capital.html. Last accessed August 25, 2018.

UNAMI/OHCHR. 2018. "Unearthing Atrocities: Mass Graves in Territories Formerly Controlled by ISIL." UN Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights, https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/IQ/UNAMI_Report_on_Mass_Graves4Nov2018_EN.pdf. Last accessed 11 April 2019.

Watts, Stephen et al. 2017. *Limited Intervention: Evaluating the Effectiveness of Limited Stabilization, Limited Strike, and Containment Operations*. RAND. https://doi.org/10.7249/RR2037

Wictorowicz, Quintan. 2006. "Anatomy of the Salafi Movement." *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 29(3): 207–239. https://doi.org/10.1080/10576100500497004

Wike, Richard, Bruce Stokes, and Jacob Poushter. 2015. "Global Publics back U.S. on Fighting ISIS but are Critical of Post 9/11 Torture." *Pew Research Center*, June, http://assets.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2015/06/Balance-of-Power-Report-FINAL-June-23-2015.pdf. Last accessed 25 August 2018.

Williams, Brian Glyn. 2017. *Counter Jihad: America's Military Experience in Iraq, Afghanistan and Syria*. University of Pennsylvania Press. https://doi.org/10.9783/9780812293463

Windram, Robin. 2014. "Who's Funding ISIS? Wealthy Gulf 'Angel Investors', Experts Say." *NBC News*, September 11, https://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/isis-terror/who-s-funding-isis-wealthy-gulf-angel-investors-officials-say-n208006. Last accessed 23 August 2018.

Wood, Graeme. 2015. "What ISIS Really Wants." *Atlantic*. March 15, https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/03/what-isis-really-wants/384980/. Last accessed August 25, 2018.

Wood, Graeme. 2016. *The Way of Strangers: Encounters with the Islamic State*. Random House.

Yunas, Abbas, Ahmed Hosny, John Scaccia, and Omar al-Jifri. 2017. "Muslim Millennial Attitudes on Religion and Religious Leadership II." Tabah *Foundation and Zogby Research Initiatives*, https://static1.squarespace.com/static/52750dd3e4b08c252c723404/t/5910ec12db29d6c079438c25/1494281235268/mmasurvey2_en_web-key-findings.pdf. Last accessed 19 August 2018.